

PEACE

1137. d. 3

IN OUR POWER,

UPON

TERMS not UNREASONABLE.

By CHARLES BARING, Esq.

K.

EXETER:

PRINTED BY R. TREWMAN AND SON;

AND SOLD BY CADELL AND DAVIES, STRAND, LONDON.

1798.

PLATE
IN OUR POWER
THE
THE

40

6 25

105



34

INTRODUCTION.

IN a moment of general alarm, it is no less the wish than the duty of every sincere friend of his country, to assist, according to his ability, in warding off the threatening danger. Impressed with this idea, the author of the following pages is willing to contribute his mite in a way which he conceives most likely to prove effectual. Having been no inattentive observer of the events which have reduced the kingdom to its present calamitous situation, he ventures

to lay before the public the result of his reflections,

If the remarks he has offered should excite attention, and prepare the way, however imperfectly, for adopting some successful plan of pacification, his end will be fully accomplished.

PEACE

PEACE in our POWER, &c.

I AM an Englishman, approaching the age of sixty, of which period, more than half has been spent in active commerce: and I have now in some measure retired from business.

Having so long enjoyed life in tranquillity under our happy constitution, which, with all its defects, I have regarded as nearer to perfection than any that ever existed; I certainly entertain for it a sincere affection; and am always ready to contribute, to the utmost of my power, to-

wards its support; in the hope of transmitting its blessings to my children and their descendants.

I have been engaged in a line of commerce, which has allowed my being perfectly independent on government; and my own moderation has ever inclined me to avoid, as much as possible, all violent party questions.

Accustomed, in my speculations, to weigh with equal balance the advantages and disadvantages of every undertaking, I can with ease apply the same balance to other subjects. Though no partisan of opposition, some things in the conduct of the present ministers I cannot but disapprove: and without being an invariable supporter of administration, I think the minority have, in several instances, carried their opposition too far.

I was

I was never a friend to the war, which, uninfluenced by interested motives, I believed from the commencement to be a mistaken mode of effecting what government wished to effect. I have never failed, upon proper occasions, to avail myself of the privilege of an Englishman in expressing my disapprobation. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the war was originally approved and supported by a large majority of the nation. The contest, it was generally supposed, would soon be decided; and the opportunity was considered favorable to retaliate upon France, for her interference in our American disputes. Our government encouraged this idea; which the nation eagerly adopted. I have repeatedly perused the correspondence and the papers published at the time of the rupture; and I am convinced that England, had she been willing, might, with infinite advantage to herself, have avoided the contest.

After hostilities had actually commenced, notwithstanding my disapprobation, I subscribed without reluctance, for raising seamen and volunteers. The majority of the nation having decided for war, I considered it in some degree the duty of the minority to acquiesce. I never approved the violent and indiscriminate opposition of Mr. Fox and his party: had they conducted themselves with more coolness and temper, we should, perhaps, have congratulated each other on an earlier termination of this unhappy contest. Moderate men, who disapprove the war, are yet afraid to commit themselves to the councils of Mr. Fox and Mr. Sheridan, the Dukes of Norfolk and Bedford.

Such, whether right or wrong, have been my political opinions and conduct, so far as I have thought it necessary to inform the reader. I have no party views
in

in this publication; but come forward as a moderate, and independant Englishman, actuated by no other motive than a desire of being useful to my country; united with that anxious wish for peace, which, in every humane bosom, ought always to predominate.

I have no wish, to disguise that I am in some measure interested on the side of peace: yet I request the reader will believe, that the sentiments submitted to his consideration, are the sentiments of a man desirous to promote the prosperity of our hitherto happy island; and in that view only, to weigh attentively the arguments which will be produced.

The design of this publication is to point out, in as plain a manner as possible, that it is still in our power to obtain a speedy peace, with a fair probability of its being durable. I would not be understood

derstood to say, that such a peace can be effected without sacrifices, which many may consider important; but that we have really the power to remove these difficulties, and that the sacrifices I propose, consist entirely of objects which, in truth, we ought never to have had in our possession; which, therefore, it would be so far from disgraceful or disadvantageous to concede, that we should acquire solid advantages by resigning them: inasmuch as, by securing the goodwill of every foreign nation, we might be enabled to preserve a perpetual peace with the whole world.

Here the reader will pause, and seriously ask himself: Whether, if my statement can be fairly established, I am not warranted in asserting, that *peace is absolutely in our own power.*

Before we examine the particulars, I will premise a few impartial observations

tions on the relative positions of England and France. It may be bad policy to entertain an idea of our situation very different from the reality.

Protected as we are by a high national spirit, by a fleet superior to the navy of the whole world, and by a very considerable army composed of excellent troops; I cannot believe that a serious impression can be made upon this island by any force which it may be possible for the enemy to bring across the channel. If we are weaker in Ireland: if a real attack be meditated or attempted on that island, the passage is longer; and as our fleets will be vigilant, I am not disposed, upon the whole, to fear much from invasion in any quarter.

There is, however, a point wherein we certainly appear to be more vulnerable; and where neither our gallantry nor our activity can avail us. We possess a large

large share of the commerce of the world. From this commerce we derive a considerable share of our revenue. Now it must be granted, that, the numerous, active, and enterprising people with whom we are at war, who have no such commerce to defend, but are in all points ready to attack whatever is not well guarded, will be able, with little more than their own peace establishment, to compel us to maintain so large a force by sea and land, for protecting ourselves and our trade, as will of necessity oblige us to an expenditure exceeding our income; and sooner or later annihilate our public credit.

The truth of this assertion no man can seriously deny; I have never heard it otherwise answered, than by vague reflections on the French directory;—that their finances were in a state as bad as our own; and that in the course of events some occurrence would arise in our favour. The
only

only chance of the latter expectation must be founded on internal commotions in France; which, though they may occur at some period or other, will not, I fear, happen early enough, or be of sufficient importance to facilitate a peace, before our finances are reduced to a very low ebb. The chapter of accidents appears rather against than for us; it being more probable, that we shall suffer from an invasion of Portugal or of Ireland, than that we shall reap the benefit of any internal agitation in France.

England then stands with an immense trade, which she can only defend, at an enormous expence.

With respect to the situation of France, I will extract a paragraph from the newspaper entitled the Evening Mail, of Friday the 9th of March last: only remarking that this paper is not unfriendly to administration.—“ A pamphlet, under the
title

title of *Considerations upon the State of Public Affairs*, is about to meet the public eye, and is attributed to the pen of Lord Auckland.—Extract from it.—I think there is but one safe and honourable way of considering the French at this period; namely, as possessing the most powerful empire in Europe, placed under the controul of the most despotic government. I behold this government wielding the whole physical means and power of the nation, without moral restraint or limit, employing the whole resource and population of their country, without obstacle or embarrassment from any law, custom, or immunity; without any scruple from their own mind, or fear from the spirit of liberty in the public mind. In their conquests they are still more (if more is possible) uncontrouled, unscrupulous, and absolute. The whole universal power and produce of the old and new territory, the growth of every field, and the labour of every arm,

arm, is placed at the discretion and arbitrament of this remorseless sovereign: whatever moves or grows upon the whole surface of his dominion is his army, or his magazine, &c."

Whether the printer had authority to quote Lord Auckland's name, or not, is immaterial. But this definition of the French power is not far from the truth; and ought reasonably to point out to our serious attention, that if our strength be great, yet we have no common enemy to combat.

Upon the whole, I believe this a fair statement of our respective situations: England can hardly defend, but at too great an expence, her vast trade; and France, with little more than her own peace establishment, can oblige England to maintain a considerable war establishment—France may be checked in her career by internal commotions, which,

which, however, may not speedily happen.

From these circumstances arises a most important question—shall we silently content ourselves with continuing the war, in confident dependance on our own bravery, and in the faint and distant expectation of some fortunate occurrence in our favour, which at last may never arise? or, shall we endeavour to obtain peace, by proposing some sacrifices on our own part; provided these sacrifices be not disgraceful, and a fair probability remains of preserving our hitherto prosperous condition?

If it be our choice to continue the war, in expectation of some favourable event, it will become necessary to regulate our expences upon a different system. From the rich still larger contributions must be required: nor will all be sufficient, unless some general defensive

five armament can be supported at a small expence.

If the attainment of peace be attempted, I should not be perfectly satisfied with such a termination of hostilities as would oblige us to continue an enormously expensive establishment. I wish, if possible, for a peace with some degree of conciliation. The difficulties which oppose it, may, I think, be removed, by adopting measures, little mortifying to our feelings, and by no means detrimental to our interest.

The sacrifices to be proposed are unimportant in comparison with the advantages which would accrue. They are, moreover, of such a nature, as would convince every reasonable person in Europe, that England not only desires an end of the present war, but that her ultimate object in future is, perpetual peace with all the world.

B

Having

Having thus cleared my ground, and introduced my opinions to the reader, I proceed to the steps for procuring this most desirable peace with some degree of conciliation.

The first is, that the title of “ King of France ” be discontinued by his Majesty. For this purpose, I would not await the formal sanction of a treaty. If an act of parliament be necessary, I recommend the introduction of a bill, the preamble to which might be expressed in terms similar to the following :—“ Whereas the government of France has been changed from a regal to a republican form ; and whereas it is foreseen that the title, held by his Majesty, of King of France, may be an obstacle to the restoration of peace between the two countries : his Majesty, anxious to remove such obstacle, has signified his desire, that an act of parliament be passed for that purpose : and it is accordingly hereby enacted, &c.”

Could

Could our administration be prevailed upon to introduce such a bill, I am persuaded a most decisive blow would be given to the ruling powers in France. This conduct would furnish such an unequivocal proof of the sincere desire of England for peace, that they would find it impossible longer to continue that inveteracy against us in the minds of the people, which has been hitherto their great support.

I cannot but consider it of the utmost importance, that such an act should be passed without delay. The object in itself is of no real value: and without the aid of a prophetic spirit, I think I may hazard the opinion, that we must either give up this "*harmless feather*," (as Mr. Pitt very properly termed it in the House of Commons) or resign ourselves to the gloomy prospect of everlasting war. For who can suppose it possible, that the *French republic* will ever make peace

with a prince, styling himself *King of France?*

I will here only add, that whatever importance the reader may annex to this title of our sovereign, it cannot be reasonably denied, that the discontinuance might tend to conciliate the French nation, and would certainly be no diminution of our national grandeur.

The second step I recommend, is, to enter into some treaty, immediate, or as early as possible, with Denmark or Sweden, or Russia or America, proposing that, in future, *neutral ships constitute neutral property*, except in particular cases of contraband trade.

England has constantly claimed and exercised, in time of war, a right of seizing and condemning the property of enemies, when found on board neutral ships of any nation. Imitating the example

ample of England, France and Spain of course have done the same: but I understand they have repeatedly expressed their readiness to give up this point, provided England would also consent to its relinquishment.

England being most powerful on the seas, her government has judged it politic to maintain the point, in direct opposition to Russia, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, and America; who all, in turn, have warmly attempted its abolition. We remember the armed neutrality, set on foot by the late Empress of Russia, in conjunction with Sweden and Denmark; which had this, and nothing else, for its object. We remember, also, the bitter complaints we have received, on the same subject, from Holland, and from the United States of America.

It would, perhaps, be too great presumption in a private individual, positively

to assert, that a point so strenuously maintained by the British government, in defiance of the remonstrances of all other nations, is not important to our interests: it may have importance and advantages which I have not been able to discover, but after having made the best enquiries in my power, the result has been a strong conviction in my own mind, that so far from being any loss, its concession would, in the present state of things, be considerably in our favor. I do not pretend to determine whether, in times past, it has or has not been for the benefit of England to support this right; but at present, its exercise operates upon the whole against us: and I am persuaded, if we could agree to abandon it entirely, a considerable advance would be made towards that perpetual peace, which, we are told, is one day to take place.

If England and France chuse to be at war, I would ask any reasonable and moderate

derate man, whether the Englishman or Frenchman can with greater propriety break into a Danish ship than into a Danish house. We should be ashamed to attempt by land what we boast of doing by sea. The French, indeed, have by land lately acted upon a similar principle; and we reproach them for their conduct; but can we do so with strict propriety, merely because the case of seizing enemies property on land is not to be found in any writer upon the laws of nations?

There is another view in which we may consider this subject; and which is, perhaps, in the opinion of many persons of greater importance. We will suppose it universally agreed, that neutral ships should carry goods in time of war without molestation. In the first place, I think we should have *no* war: but if in this assertion I assume too much; admitting that we unavoidably do engage in war, our agriculture would still be at-

tended to, and our manufactures flourish; our insular situation would enable us to defend ourselves against invasion; and our navy would defend our colonies. Surely, wars would be less frequent; and Great-Britain would gain more than she would lose, by relinquishing this system, and complying with the desire of almost every other nation.

When the propositions already mentioned have been acceded to; that is, when his Majesty shall have consented to discontinue the title of "King of France;" and when it shall in some decided way have been agreed, or proposed to agree, that neutral ships constitute neutral property, on condition that France and Spain accord;—then, and not till then, I propose to offer terms of peace to France, upon the principle of resigning, both to herself and to her allies, all our conquests without reserve.

This

This proposal, perhaps, would be more likely to succeed, if transmitted by a common messenger, than through the hands of Lord Auckland or Lord Malmesbury. It should be explicit, and expressed in terms not unlike the following:—"His Majesty the King of Great-Britain, having found by repeated experience how much his desire for the restoration of peace has been misunderstood or misconstrued, upon occasion of the negotiations which took place some time past in Paris and in Lisle, has thought it a duty owing to his affectionate and faithful subjects, to signify in this public manner, that after having spontaneously removed some things which it has been judged might prove obstructions to the restoration of peace, he has come to the resolution of declaring, that he is disposed to treat of peace upon the principle of restoring to France, Spain, and Holland, all the conquests Great-Britain has made from those powers. His Majesty considering further, of how much importance

importance it is, that he should not be again misunderstood, thinks it essential to add, that the restoration of all his conquests is the absolute ultimatum of his proposals for peace: that he can never agree to make any compensation for the ships taken or destroyed at Toulon (which has been demanded); or to any other concession or sacrifice, however unimportant in its nature. It will be a great satisfaction to him, if it shall be found possible for Great-Britain to maintain the accustomed relations of amity and commerce with the republic of France, provided they can be maintained without hazarding the constitutions of Great Britain and Ireland, which the King is determined to defend to the latest moment of his life."

Such a declaration, published first in England, and afterwards transmitted to France by a common messenger, and not by any great diplomatic character, would, in my opinion, have more weight than
any

any other mode of negociation in procuring peace with the French directory.

That the present wish of the directory cannot be in favour of pacification with England, will scarcely be doubted. It is not for their individual interest to make peace, because they would no longer have a pretence for keeping together so formidable an army. On the other hand, the French people at large are disposed to peace: and the reason which has prevented the effect of this general disposition, arises, in part, from the circumstance of the English nation being considered the cause of the greatest calamities in which they have been involved; and, in part, from the artifices of the directory, who evidently wish to prolong the war.

In this country, men differ in opinion with respect to the commencement of the war; but no such diversity of opinion subsists

subsists in France: there, they almost unanimously believe England the aggressor, for the purpose of conquest; which renders it more easy for the directory to persuade the people that we are their bitterest enemies. But if proposals were offered, incapable of misconstruction, they would either terminate the war, or make the directory unpopular, to a degree subversive of their power.

Terms from England would not come like terms from Sardinia, or Tuscany, or Naples: they would come from a nation, able indeed, if compelled, to continue the war, I trust, for years; but desirous, if possible, of terminating hostilities; and even willing to make some sacrifices, as proofs of her sincere disposition.

What loss would England suffer by such a peace? I answer, without a moment's hesitation, she would lose nothing worth contending for, and she would
gain

gain every thing: her immense debt might yet be fairly liquidated: her commerce would be more considerable than ever.

The lot of England, in consequence of the peace I am pleading for, is almost certain: she will have cut off one chief source of the discords which had before arisen with foreign nations; and resting herself once again upon her much-improved agriculture, her superior manufactures, and her extensive commerce, she will feel the propriety, and even the necessity, of avoiding all continental connections: she will never more have occasion to stimulate, at her cost, Austria or Prussia against France, or France against any other power: she may, in that respect, imitate Denmark, and Sweden, and America, and may say to all the continental powers—fight on, my good friends, if you chuse: I am heartily sorry for your differences: but no more English guineas will

will be scattered: England resigns forever the expensive post of balance-master general.

The lot of the French people is very far from being so certain: they have many formidable difficulties to contend with, before they establish a government of long duration. But whatever may be their struggles, England ought to be, and ought always to have been, a tranquil spectator.

While we are deliberating on the concessions necessary to obtain peace, although we may consider that titles and points of honour were worthy contention when our commerce was comparatively trifling, and our agriculture miserable; we ought also to reflect upon the changes which have taken place within the last fifty years. Our agriculture has moved forward with gigantic strides: our manufactures surpass credibility: our commerce

merce extends to every corner of the globe.

In such circumstances, and with such advantages, can it be prudent for us to hazard every thing by the continuance of a destructive war, with a nation, our next neighbour; in point of numbers, our superior; in point of force, our equal; herself in a convulsed state, and capable, from desperation, of doing us considerable injury? Shall we not rather use our best endeavours to end the contest, by proposing such terms, and taking such steps as are reasonably within our power?

The reader will naturally enquire, what fair objections may be offered to the execution of the plan suggested. In reply to such a question, I will candidly communicate all I have been able to collect, after the minutest enquiry.

With

With respect to the resignation of the title of "King of France," I have never once heard the smallest objection; although, in the course of conversation, I have purposely introduced the subject in presence of several persons, who themselves possessed titles. The general opinion seems to be, that the King of Great Britain and Ireland can add nothing to his real dignity by the additional title of *King of France*.

With respect to neutral ships being permitted to sail without interruption in time of war; many persons have remarked, that this measure appeared to contract the dominion, and yield the superiority of the British nation upon the seas. I confess, it struck me at first in the same light. But I have yet met with no one person with whom I have had an opportunity of conversing upon the subject, who has not, like myself, become a convert to the opinion, that England ought
no

no longer to maintain this point : many, who were at first alarmed at the idea, have since acknowledged, that, independently of any necessity to relinquish it for pacific ends, the positive advantage of England dictates its relinquishment for ever.

To the resignation of our conquests, without exception, I have not lately heard any serious obstacle mentioned. Indeed, it seems to be a commonly received opinion, that Lord Malmesbury had instructions, when at Lisle, to proceed to this length, provided he could have obtained peace by the concession. The haughty conduct of the French directory, affording proof that they were adverse to any terms of peace whatever, prevented this proposal from being made.

I can with safety affirm, that after the most careful enquiry, I have not been able to collect a single objection to either

C

of

of my three propositions, which, when impartially weighed, I could consider of the least solidity; especially when compared with the important advantages placed in the opposite scale.

I should not, however, speak the whole truth, consistently with my wishes, if I passed unnoticed three objections upon the ground of negotiating in general, which, in the course of my enquiries, I have repeatedly heard.

The first is, that it would attain no good purpose to offer *any* proposals, until the French directors discover a disposition for peace. To this I reply, that if we are inclined to wait the better disposition of the directory, we must remain contented with eternal war. Nothing is clearer to my own mind, than that it is for the individual interest of the five directors to continue war with England. The plan I have lain before the reader rests

rests upon other grounds: it means to establish an interest with the French nation; which would, I think, overthrow, or at least counter-balance the peculiar interest of the directors.

Another objection I have heard, is, that any commencement of proposals except in the old way of open negociation, would be considered by the nation as humbling ourselves to a haughty enemy. In reply, I ask: Are the articles which I have stated in any degree so humiliating as was the grant of American independence? A measure which few people will now venture to condemn. The title, in some way or other, must be yielded; and I conceive it would be resigned with a better grace in this way, than by an absolute treaty. I am not an advocate for unnecessary humiliation; and would rather lose many drops of my blood, than surrender to the enemy a single picture

or statue, however insignificant might be its value.

The third objection is, that peace would be unavailing, while the government of France remains as it is ; because we should be inundated with French people, who would be perpetually insulting us. I answer, that whenever we make peace, we may experience inconveniences of this nature for some time ; but I believe, by continuing the alien act, and by such other measures as may be occasionally found necessary, all serious inconveniences will be obviated. Besides, peace has been already twice proposed by our government : consequently, this objection does not peculiarly attach to my propositions.

In declaring thus plainly my sentiments, I trust my wish for peace has not betrayed me into a desire that improper sacrifices should be made. I am unconscious

scious of having proposed any concessions but such as I could easily imagine the guardian angel of England would propose to the guardian angel of France. The sacrifices in themselves are not unreasonable ; and would still leave us in a capacity to support the character of a great, a respected, and a happy nation.

The resignations I have proposed are, perhaps, in themselves proper, although I may not have supported their expediency by the best arguments. Whatever measures we pursue, we must always expect opposition from the French directory, so far as they can venture to oppose : we should, therefore, be prepared for every cavil on their part. But I hope, by coolness and by firmness, we shall, in spite of themselves, oblige them to peace.

By such a conduct towards these gentlemen, we should much better attain our purpose than by personal and acrimonious
 invectives ;

invectives ; which, I am persuaded, they are not displeased to observe in our parliamentary speeches. Our speakers do not sufficiently consider how much the directory make a merit with their countrymen of being personally abused by the government of England.

I have thus, according to my best abilities, offered a plan for peace ; which, if it could be carried into execution, might leave England still prosperous and happy. I hope the reader has been convinced, that to obtain such a peace is not only possible, but probable ; provided England will adopt the means in her power, with respect to the terms, and the mode of negociation. I am myself so firmly persuaded of the efficacy of this plan, that I should with the utmost readiness stake my life upon the issue. I wish heartily the experiment could be made, and the rather, as by each step taken, England would actually reap some positive advantage.

If,

If, however, we should be disappointed. If after such an attempt, peace could not be obtained. If, contrary to every reasonable expectation, the French directory should be able to keep their ground, and the French nation should maintain their animosity against us; I can only say, the man must be devoid of every feeling, and be in truth, a bastard Briton, who would not spend his last guinea, and shed the last drop of his blood, in defence of his King and his Country.



1847

It is, however, we should be
pointed. It is not an attempt to
could not be obtained. It is
every reasonable expectation, that
directly itself is able to keep
ground, and the French nation
maintain their authority against
only by the arm must be
every feeling, and he is truly a
Union, who is loyal to the
ground, and the flag of the
land in the hands of the



